

The Good Soldiers by David Finkel

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David Finkel is an editor, journalist with The Washington Post and the author of *The Good Soldiers*. He is a Pulitzer Prize winner for his explanatory reporting in 2006 for a series of stories about U.S. funded democracy efforts in Yemen.

Finkel was embedded with the 2-16th Infantry Battalion based in Baghdad. They were to be part of President George W. Bush's "surge" in 2007. Finkel's account of the new strategy of the war in Iraq is told through his eight month involvement with the 2-16 Battalion soldiers, in the U.S. and the highly volatile and unpredictable roadside bombs of Baghdad.

He captures the feelings of the pre deployed soldiers with their ideals of hope, honor, love of their country and winning the war. Finkel grabs the reader by the scruff of the neck with his no holds barred description of events that change these soldier's lives forever. Actions that occur in Baghdad which the newspapers report as horrific, is the normal day to day routine for these soldiers. This is due to their crazy environment they now live in. Finkel describes how these young men are robbed of their youth as they learn very early on in Baghdad about death, fear and destruction.

Finkel was able to capture the heartache and difficulties that the families and soldiers faced when they returned home. As one soldier wrote in his last journal entry, 'I've lost all hope. I feel the end is near for me, very, very near. Day by day my misery grows like a storm, ready to swallow me whole and take me to the unknown. Yet all I can fear is the unknown'. His wife mentioned 'that he was turning into a zombie and their marriage was dying'.

The Good Soldiers is beautifully written and is difficult to put down. This book is not just for soldiers. Families that have had family members deployed to Iraq would find Finkel's book to be an inroad to the minds of their loved ones. Like this comment on how his soldiers felt, "They're angry. Very angry," he said of the platoon, which of course included himself. "How can anybody kill and function normally afterward? It's not the humane response."

The Good Soldiers is the best book I have read on the Iraq War.

Reviewed by Gordon Traill

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